

THE
PEDLAR's
LETTER
TO THE
BISHOPS and CLERGY
OF
IRELAND.



DUBLIN:
Printed in the YEAR MDCCCLX.

THE
P E D L A R
L E T T E R
TO THE
BISHOPS and CLERGY

I R L A N D



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TO THE
READER.

THE PEDLAR *seems to have*
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The PEDLAR's
L E T T E R.

My Lords,

PERMIT a poor Tradesman humbly to entreat your Lordships to suspend, for a-while, your Care and Attendance upon Linen-Boards, Navigation-Boards, and Barrack-Boards; leave them to the Laity, and apply yourselves to the Promotion and Propagation of the Protestant Religion amongst the lowest Classes of the People, among whom it is almost extinct. Your Lordships, perhaps, do not know as well as I do, who travel with my Budget on my Back to all the remote Corners of the Kingdom, that, except in the large Market Towns,
I cannot

I cannot find a Protestant to drink a Mugg of Ale with me. If the Hearth-money Men were in their Books to distinguish the Protestant and Popish Heads of Families, paying only two Shillings, a Year Hearth-money, it would be found that the latter out-number the former, at least, Twenty to One. The *French*, perhaps, know this better than your Lordships. The *Irish* Priests have all their Education in *France*, and they know the Strength and Weakness of the two Religions very well, and what is more they know many to be Papists whom we and the Law esteem Protestants.

It is said, and believed, that the *French* intended to land five and twenty thousand Men in this Kingdom, and to bring with them Arms for twenty thousand more; they are disappointed for this Time, but it will become your Lordships, both as Statesmen and Divines, to guard against future Attempts of the same Kind, by increasing as fast as possible the Number of Protestants amongst the lower People, that we may have Hands to put Arms into in Time of Need.

I know many good Protestants think we have nothing to fear from the wealthy Roman Catholicks of this Kingdom; they have
certainly

certainly given Proofs of their Loyalty, and it is true that they have Reason to be satisfied with the Lenity of his Majesty's Administration, but no body can say with Truth that they have Reason to be satisfied with the Penal Laws that subsist against them, nor is it to be imagin'd that in Times of Confusion and Danger they could be able to restrain the poorer Sort, who after all are a martial People when under good Discipline, and value themselves highly upon their Birth and the Antiquity of their Nation and Families, and are not to be despised as Soldiers. But if the Men of Property are ever so well satisfied with the present Establishment, yet certainly their Priests, whose Influence over their People is ever to be dreaded in a Protestant State, are by no Means satisfied with the Government, nor ever will be untill they possess the Tyths and Church-Lands of the Kingdom, which I believe your Lordships are not disposed to part with. But let us suppose the Roman Catholicks in general as well affected as possible, yet still we want Protestant Hands to put Arms into upon Occasion, for I suppose no body thinks of putting Arms into the Hands of the Papists to defend us from the *Irish* Brigades in the *French* Service, if they should attempt to invade this Kingdom. It is not my Design to make your Lordships

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Danger appear greater than it is, I only hint at what, I hope, when considered, will make your Lordships more active in increasing our Numbers amongst the Common People, by at least preventing the few Protestant People we have and their Children from Popish Seduction. It is not necessary to take Notice here of the several Reasons that may be assigned for this falling off of our poor People. Papists are very zealous and assiduous in this Business of Convert-making, the Protestants very careless about it.

It is said our Parish Ministers do not desire to have any Protestants in their Parishes; I thought this Scandal and Malice, but having lately been Witness to a Treaty between two Ministers about Swopping their Livings, one of them insisted that his Benefice was better than the other by fifty Pounds a Year, because he had but two Protestant Families in his Union. The other allowed it to be a considerable Advantage, but thought it enough to allow thirty Pounds a Year Difference on that Account; he owned, however, that if there was any Prospect of the two Protestant Families leaving the Parish, or turning Papists, he would allow ten Pounds a Year more in the Swop, for so desirable a Circumstance, I am therefore inclined to think there may

may be some Truth in the Remark, but be that as it may, it is most certain that the true Cause, why so many of our poor Protestants are daily falling off from the Religion of their Forefathers, is principally owing to the Want of Parish Churches and of resident Parish Ministers; the common People have no Notion of a Religion without publick Worship and a regular Administration of Sacraments: Your Lordships seem to know this very well, and accordingly you have filled the Statute-Book with Laws for the Union and Division of Parishes; for building and repairing Churches; for changing the Scite of old Churches to more convenient Places; for erecting Chapels of Ease; for enabling the Clergy to reside; for augmenting small Vicarages; for the better maintenance of Curates; for maintaining Parish Clerks; &c. &c. The Titles of them at large would make my Letter too long, and yet after all they don't signify a Farthing. There are sixteen hundred Parish Churches in the Kingdom in Ruins, and of the six hundred that are standing, one third is ready to tumble, and the Clergy do not reside as they ought to do. The true Cause of this scandalous Neglect, and almost Disuse of Divine Service in the remote Country Parishes where the Churches are all in Ruins, is

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chiefly

chiefly owing to two Canons of our own Church, which have certainly done more Hurt to the Protestant Religion, in *Ireland*, than all the Rest have done Good; how proper they may be in *England*, where they first took their Rise, I will not take upon me to say, but surely they were by no Means proper Laws for *Ireland*, where the Parish Churches still are, and at the Framing these Canons were, almost universally in Ruins.

The Canons I complain of are the 21st and the 45th. The 21st forbids the Clergy, under Pain of Excommunication, to preach, or administer the Sacrament, in private Houses, but in Case of Sickness, where the Inhabitant is not able to go from Home; and the 45th forbids the People to detain their Tythes from their Parish Minister, by Colour of Duty omitted, which the Canon modestly calls, requiting one Wrong with another: This Canon further directs, that, in Cases of Neglect of Duty, the People shall seek for Reformation to their Ordinaries; there could not, in my Apprehension, be two Canons better contrived to extinguish Religion, or a Sense of it, amongst Mankind; for what Relief can the Bishop give the People who require Divine Service at the Hands of their Parish Minister, where the Church is in Ruins.

Ruins. If your Lordships should require the Incumbent to officiate in a private House, till a Church can be built, you would be told the Canon forbid it under Pain of Excommunication. Can there be greater Encouragement, to a bad Clergyman, to let his Church go to Ruin, when by so doing he exempts himself from the Trouble of officiating in his Parish, or saves the Expence of keeping a Curate. As the Law now stands, the Parish Minister, or his Curate, only, can legally call a Vestry to lay in Money to repair, or rebuild the Church, and how ill this Duty so contrary to the Interest of the Incumbent is executed, Experience tells us. Every Gentleman in the House of Commons, knows the ruinous State of the Churches in his own Country, perhaps, as well as your Lordships, and the true Reason why Vestries are not duly called; the Statutes and Canons give the Parson sufficient Means to inforce the rebuilding the Parish Church, but, unhappily for Religion, it is not the Interest of the Incumbent vigorously to execute them.

I heard a great learned Man say, these two Canons were framed in a *Pandemonium*, which, I suppose, is *Latin* for an Assembly of Bishops and Clergymen, because I read in the latter End of the great Church Prayer

Book, that these two Canons, with others, were treated on, or made, by the Bishops and Clergy at their Synod holden at *Dublin*, in the Year 1634. A Repeal of these two Canons by a clear and peremptory Act of Parliament, requiring the Incumbent or his Curate, to celebrate Divine Service in his own House, or some other convenient House in the Parish, until the Parish Church shall be rebuilt, and further enabling the Parishioners and Landholders respectively, to detain, and convert to their own Use, their Tythes for the Year in which it can't be made appear, by proper Proof, that Divine Service has been performed within the Parish, for at least forty Sundays within the Year, reckoning from the first Day of *January*, will effectually enforce the Residence of the Incumbent, which no Law hitherto devised has been sufficient to effect: Twelve Sundays, or Weeks of the Year, are here allowed for the necessary Avocations of the Incumbent or his Curate, which is more than sufficient. But this being a new Law ought only to take Place in every Parish upon the Death, Promotion, Resignation, Deprivation, Amotion, or Cession of the present Incumbent.

A Statute compelling the Clergy under Penalty of the Loss of the Year's Tythes,
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to celebrate Divine Service, in their own or some other convenient House within the Parish, until the Church is rebuilt, will greatly accelerate the building of Churches; when the Reason why the Incumbent suffers his Church to go to Ruin ceases, his Complaint of the Difficulty of assembling the Parishioners to lay in Money for repairing the Church will also cease; and when he heartily sets about it, a Parish Cess will be easily made and levied.

The obliging the Clergy to preach and administer the Sacraments, in private Houses, until the Church shall be rebuilt, is both just and necessary; the Apostles and their immediate Successors did so before they had Churches built to officiate in, and if they had not done so we should probably have had no Christian Churches built to this Day.

It is neither unjust nor unreasonable for the People to withhold their Tythes from an Incumbent who does not officiate in his Parish; that the Benefice is a Consideration given for the Performance of Divine Offices, is notorious to all Men. Saint *Paul* founds his Right to partake of the Altar, upon his Service at the Altar; and tells us that the Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the Gospel,

Gospel, should live of the Gospel; from whence it follows, naturally enough, that such of them as preach not the Gospel, should not live of the Gospel.

A Statute, such as I have mentioned, compelling the Clergy to preach and administer the Sacrament in private Houses, until their Churches are rebuilt, under Penalty of the Year's Tythes, will meet with all the legal Opposition from the inferior Clergy, no doubt, that can be given to it. It seems, however, not to be liable to any solid or reasonable Objection.

Your Lordships will be told, and perhaps think, that the Income of a small Country Parish is not a competent Maintenance for an officiating Minister, and that it is, therefore, necessary to unite, or rather accumulate, many such Parishes to make a proper Provision for a Clergyman; and that a Parish worth only 30 or 40 l. a Year, cannot, in Reason, expect to be duly attended by it's Incumbent, this Objection has no Weight, but upon a Supposition that it is more for the the Service of Religion, that the inferior Clergy should live in Ease and Luxury, than that the Duties of public Worship should be duly and regularly performed; if the Clergy are not to preach or administer
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the Sacrament, to what End are they maintained; perhaps it will be said, and with Truth in many Cases it may be said, that the Incumbent of six or eight Parishes, does generally officiate in some one of them; but where is the Justice of taking the tenth Part of the Labour and Industry of the poor People of six Parishes, to maintain a Parson who lives in another Diocese, perhaps in another Province. If a Parish is not able, from the Tenacity of its Fruits, to maintain an Incumbent, let it be without one for a Time; let the Tythe be sequestered by the Bishop, and paid over to the Trustees of the First Fruits, to be laid out in purchasing a proper Glebe, or fining down the Rent of a convenient Farm for the resident Minister or Curate, or put to Interest for his Use, thus in time, the poorest Benefice may become a Competency for a resident Minister; better surely it is, for the People of such poor Parishes, to be without a Pastor for a Time, than have only a nominal Parish Minister for ever.

It is also said that a poor Clergy will be always contemptible, if not scandalous; this Notion has been industriously propagated by bad and avaritious Clergymen, but upon Examination and Experience, it will not be found true.

true. — The Office and Character of a Clergyman is, in itself, certainly, honourable and reputable, and if any of the Body are contemptible or scandalous, it is more owing to their Want of Morals than Want of Wealth; Religion, Virtue and Piety, will be always esteemed and respected, even in the poorest Clergyman: Such poor Men do not indeed meet with the outward Respect that is paid to a Bishop, but they have more of the internal, or mental Regard and Respect of the common People, and more Influence over them, than the wealthiest Clergymen, who are indeed too often rather Objects of Envy and Ill-will, than of real Respect. The most learned and observing Church Historians tells us that the Catholick Religion, about the Time of the Reformation, was chiefly preserved by the Poverty and austere Lives of the Mendicant Orders of Fryars, when the Wealth and Power of the Secular Clergy had almost extinguished all Sense of Religion amongst thinking and observing Men. It is, besides, not true, in Fact, that thirty or forty Pounds a Year is not a competent Maintenance for an officiating Clergyman in a poor Country Parish; and I am sure that good Men may be found, ready and willing to reside, and do their Duty, for such Stipends. It is true that Men of great Learning and University Education, will

will not accept of such Preferments, nor is it proper or necessary they should; perhaps the polite Manners and great Learning acquired, by Men of Family and Fortune, in our Polite and Elegant University, make them unfit for the Service of poor country Cures; there are, thank God, Preferments in the Church of *Ireland*, not unworthy the Acceptance of Men of the best Families in the Kingdom; it is for the Interest and Service of Religion there should be such; but it is not necessary that all Clergymen should be rich and great.

It is well known that the inferior Clergy, in *Wales* and the North of *England*, are, generally, very poorly provided for, few of them having more than 20 l. a Year, many less, but it is also true, that they are generally regular in the Exercise of their Duty; and that the common People under their Care, are as honest, and as virtuous, as the common People of any other Nation in Christendom.

The Bishops in *England* ordain for these poor Parishes, Men who have been bred at Country Free-Schools; Men of good moral Characters, who read *English* well, and are able to give an Account of their Faith in

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Latin, which is all the Canon in such Cases requires, or is indeed necessary: The Incumbents of these small Benefices in *England* and *Wales*, are generally the Sons of honest and reputable Farmers or Shopkeepers, who think themselves very happy in breeding up a Son for the Service of the Church, and are well satisfied to see him in a Station so reputable.

We have no Reason, upon the Whole, to believe or imagine, that the younger Sons of genteel Families in *Ireland*, will not accept of such small Benefices, from whence they may rise to better, since we see Men of good Families, every Day, seeking for Employments in the Revenue, less reputable and not more profitable. It has been said, that the poor Clergy, for Want of Glebes and Glebe-Houses, cannot find Places in their Parishes to reside in; but there is no Foundation for such Surmises; if a Gentleman is sent from *Dublin* to the remotest and wildest Part of the Coast of *Ireland*, to serve as a Coast-Officer, Surveyor, or Exciseman, we never hear of his quitting his Employment because he cannot get a Place to live in; he knows his Bread depends upon his Attendance on his Duty; let the inferior Clergy be put, in this Respect only, upon the same footing with the Revenue Officers and they will soon find
Places,

Places, within their respective Parishes, to reside in: The Office of a Clergyman is much more respectable than that of a Coast or Tide Officer, and much more acceptable is the Person of a Clergyman to the People than that of a Tax-Gatherer, and yet these last always find a Place, within their Walk, to live in, however unacceptable their Employments, at least, if not their Persons, are to the People amongst whom they live. It would be no such severe Distress upon a Clergyman of thirty or forty Pounds a Year to live, as perhaps the best People in the Parish do, in a snug thatched House, and if a small Part of the Fund called First Fruits was laid out in building such Houses for poor Incumbents of this kind, it would be no inconsiderable Addition to the Value of their Benefices; there is scarce a Parish that has not two or three Acres of Glebe, on which the Glebe-House might be built, contiguous to which a Farm of ten, twenty or forty Acres, could be easily procured at a low Rent, for a small Fine, to make the Life of the Incumbent, at least, as happy or comfortable, as, perhaps, the most considerable Inhabitant in the Parish. If the Commissioners of the First Fruits were duly authorized by an Act of Parliament, to lay out a sufficient Part of their great Fund in building thatched Houses, and fining down the Rent

of small Farms, for the Use of these poor resident Parish Ministers or Curates, such a Law, well executed, would do more Service in propagating the Protestant Religion amongst the lower People, than all the Improvements they will have an Opportunity of purchasing these hundred Years to come. It may not, perhaps, be thought proper to restrain totally the Power of granting Faculties to enable deserving Men to hold Pluralities, all that seems necessary and reasonable, in that Case, is that these Pluralists should pay a Curate in every Parish where they do not officiate themselves, but I rely upon it, that whilst the smallest Parishes are without resident Curates, we can never hope to see a Protestant common People in *Ireland*.

The proposed Law will supply the Parishes with resident Ministers, and that being once effected, it will be easy to get the Churches rebuilt. The influencing Spirit of Religion will make the People willing to contribute to the Work, when they are thus assured of having a resident Minister; but as, I think, the Burthen of rebuilding the Churches does not, in Justice, lie upon the People, tho' a Custom introduced in Times of Ignorance and Superstition seems to have laid it upon the Parishes in these Kingdoms, contrary to
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the the Usage in almost all other Christian Nations: I shall venture to offer some Reasons why, I think, the keeping up and rebuilding the Churches lies on your Lordships, in your respective Dioceſſes.

It is well known to all Men verſed in the Church Hiſtory, and particularly to your Lordships, that there were Biſhops in the Chriſtian Church for ſome Centuries before they had any immoveable Eſtates, and, I believe, no body imagines that the Biſhops themſelves purchaſed Eſtates, and endowed their Sees and Succeſſors with them. The Biſhops then had their Eſtates from the Publick; this we know, as well as we know any hiſtorical Fact whatſoever; and we further know the Uſes and Purpoſes for which they were given, and the Publick who gave them has ſtill a Right to require that the Terms of the original Grant ſhall be complied with and duly performed, to which, I hope, your Lordships can have no Objections.

Father *Paul*, in his excellent Treatiſe of Eccleſiaſtical Benefices and Revenues, tells us, that the eſtabliſhed Cuſtom in the Church, of living in common, being diſcontinued in the Weſt, the Biſhops, from being Super-
vifors and Adminiſtrators of the Revenues,
began

began to use them as if they were their own. Hence followed great Confusion in the Application of these Estates, to the great Detriment of the Fabricks, which fell to Ruin, &c. It was therefore ordered, in the Year 470, that a geometrical Division of the Churches Estates should be made into four Parts; the first Part was to go to the Bishop; the second to the Rest of the Clergy; the third to the Fabrick of the Church, the fourth to the Poor. If then the Bishops of these Kingdoms have found Means again to elude this Law, and violate the sacred Trust reposed in them, can the Publick be under any Difficulty in reclaiming this Fourth which belongs to the Fabrick, and seeing it applied to the Purposes for which it was given. The Bishops, in this Case, will in vain plead Custom or Prescription, since by the Laws of the Land, and, indeed, in all Christian Nations, no Prescription, or length of Time, can bar the Right of the Church, by which I understand it meant the People or Congregation who compose the Church, and not the Bishop who certainly is not the Church: And in Courts of Equity no Length of Time can sanctify a Title founded originally on a Breach of Trust. But, that I may not be called a Broacher of new and unheard of Doctrines, suffer me again to quote Father *Paul*, who, in Page 77, enquiring

quiring into and stating this Question, viz. ' Who is Owner of the ecclesiastical Estates,' concludes thus, viz. " To end this Argument, upon the fullest Examination, it must be concluded that the Prelates and the other Ecclesiasticks are the Guardians, Administrators, and Disposers of the Estates of the Church, to pursue and execute the Intention of the Donor or Testator, and to no other Purpose whatsoever, and therefore, says that excellent Casuist, all Governors of the Church, ought with conscientious Care to review and ponder the Conditions of these Endowments, for the Neglect of which, nothing but human Frailty can be pleaded, nor ought any Man to imagine that Prescription, or long Usage, can have any Force here; seeing no Man can pretend to any Benefit from Prescription, where Integrity and good Conscience is wanting, and how can any Claim be laid to these, where every Man knows and is conscious that these Estates have not been bequeathed by the Donors, to be employed as we frequently find them." Thus that excellent and truly pious Divine, urges this Matter to the Consciences of the Governors of the Church, and it is to be hoped, whenever this Misapplication of this Revenue appropriated to the Fabrick of the Churches shall come under
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the Consideration of Parliament, your Lordships will lead the Way, in promoting a Law, to restore to the Church what human Frailty only can apologize for, your Lordships, and your Predecessors having so long converted to their and your own Uses.

It will, in my Apprehension, not be difficult to put this Matter relating to the Fabrick of the Church, upon such a Footing as will relieve the Laity from a Burthen unjustly laid upon them, without lessening the annual Revenue of the Bishop, which ought to be, and indeed is, every where in this Kingdom, sufficient to support the Dignity, which is all the Publick, or Religion is concerned in; for it is by no Means necessary to Religion, or the Publick Utility, that a Bishop should be able to raise his Son to the Peerage, or give his Daughter fifty thousand Pounds to her Fortune, out of the Revenues of the Church, given and appropriated by the Donors and the Laws, to keep the Fabrick of the Church in due repair.

The Fines the Bishops usually receive, for Renewal of the Leases of the Estate of the Church, which, though very short of the third Part appropriated to the Fabrick, being paid into the Hands of proper Trustees, will
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be a Fund sufficient, in a few Years, to rebuild all the ruinous Churches in the Kingdom; for I am sure two thousand Pounds will build twenty small Churches, for so many poor Parishes of every Diocess, which, throughout the Kingdom, will give us about four hundred new Churches, which if the proposed Laws, before-mentioned, shall take Place, will be constantly attended by a regular and exemplary parochial Clergy. It is to be hoped no Bishop would obstruct the Scheme, by refusing to renew for the usual Fine, which, I think, ought to be settled at one Year's Rent for a Renewal of five, and proportionably when more than five Years of the Lease are expired: But as some of them may be refractory, the Bishop may be compelled to come in by a Law, putting it in the Power of the Tenant, by a proper Bill in Equity, and paying the stated Fine into Chancery, to enforce a Renewal for as many Years of the One and Twenty as are expired: Such short Renewals as these can be no Detriment to the Succession, for as the Tenant can never have more than an Interest for twenty one Years in the Estate of the Church, so whenever, by the Multiplication or Increase of Gold and Silver in *Europe*, the present Income shall be found insufficient to support the Dignity, it will always

be in the Power of the State to suffer the Rents to be properly raised; but for the Legislature, knowing that three Fourths of the Churches in the Kingdom are in Ruins, to look on, and suffer your Lordships to refuse to renew to the Tenants, and suffer the Leases to expire, in order to raise an exorbitant and unnecessary Revenue to the Bishop, or rather to raise exorbitant Fines for themselves; or, perhaps, in order to let new Leases at the old Rents, to their own Children, is surely the greatest Absurdity imaginable, founded in an erroneous Opinion, that Bishops, who are bare Trustees for the Public, have the same Propriety and Dominion over the Estate or Patrimony of the Church, as Laymen have in the Estates which descended to them from their Ancestors, and were purchased with their own Money. Thus, My Lords, I hope I have fully demonstrated the People's just Right to have the Churches kept up by the Fund originally granted for that Purpose: If your Lordships should wonder why this Claim is now revived, Justice and Truth oblige me to say, that it is much owing to the indiscreet and rash Conduct of some of your own Body; for if your Lordships had all used the same Moderation in renewing Leases, that has been practised by the Head of your Order, in this Kingdom,

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under the strongest Temptations to the contrary, this claim had, perhaps, never been revived. I think I may further add, that if the Legislature shall think reasonable to continue your Lordships in the exercise of this Power of applying the Fines to your own Uses, your Lordships will owe it more to his Graces Virtues and unexampled Moderation, than to any just Title you show for so doing.

I am,

Your Lordships most obedient Servant,

A PEDLAR.

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under the thought I expounded to the con-
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Use, your Lordships will owe more to his
Grace's Virtues and unassisted Moderation
than to say just Time you show for to doing.

I am,

Your Lordships most obedient servant,

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POSTSCRIPT.

I Have been lately informed that an honest Bishop of *Waterford*, called Dr. *Fell*, conscious that he had applied to his own Use, that Part of the Estate of the Church, which had been, as before-mentioned, appropriated to the Fabrick, conscientiously left the Income of an Estate to be laid out from time to time, in building Churches for the Diocese, but I cannot hear that any of his Brethern have followed so commendable an Example: I am also told that a Successor of his, called Dr. *Mills*, as often as he quarrelled with any of his Clergy, which happened pretty often, was won't, out of the above Fund, to build Churches for them, and conscientiously compel the Incumbents to reside.

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It is, indeed, very happy for the Laity that holy Men do frequently fall out, because a smart Quarrel between a Bishop and Parson, generally gives the People an additional resident Parish Minister, or at least, a licensed Curate; thus we sometimes see Good come of Evil.

F I N I S.

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In the Press and speedily will be published,

A CURIOUS and USEFUL

DISSERTATION

UPON

ECCLESIASTICAL VISITATIONS,

As They are usually Held

IN THIS KINGDOM.



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DISSEMINATION

UPON

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